Communist Prober Benjamin Mandel

Benjamin Mandel, 82, a retired congressional researcher who played an important role in probes of communist activities in this country, died Wednesday at the Mar-Salle Convalescent Home.

Mr. Mandel had been research director of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee from 1951 until his retirement in 1967 and had remained as a consultant to the subcommittee for a number of years.

Earlier he had served on the research staff of the House Un-American Activities Committee and also had done security work for the State Department.

Born in New York City, Mr. Mandel had taught in public schools there. In the 1920s, he became a member of the U.S. Communist Party and eventually was business manager of The Daily Worker.

He was expelled, along with a number of other party members, by a Stalin purge in 1929 and in the years that followed, became an avid foe of communism.

Because of his knowledge of Communist startegy, tactics and subversion, as well as his attitude toward communism, he was asked to join the Un-American Activities Committee in 1939.

He left the committee in 1945 to work for the State Department for two years, then returned to assist the committee in the Alger Hiss case.

His role in the party and his part in the investigation of Hiss is related in the fate Whittaker Chambers book, "Witness."

Mr. Mandel believed that the best way to fight communism in this country was to expose it. After he joined the Senate subcommittee, in 1951 he explained:

"You've got to assume there is a present communist conspiracy, and it is obvious the communists want every additional scrap of atomic information they can lay hands on.

"There are two ways to meet this conspiracy. One is to have a secret police. The other is to develop the evidence in the American way, in open hearings and with sworn testimony. The goal should never be to railroad people; always to respect civil liberties."

Mr. Mandel was co-author of a book exposing Stalinism, entitled "I Was a Soviet Worker." He also drafted a number of congressional documents and reports, including "A Handbook for Americans: The Communist Party of the United States of America, What It Is, How It Works."

After his retirement, he was praised by top officials for his dedication to his work as an investigator and for his patriotism.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret Rees Mandel, of the home, 4427 P St. NW.